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The Wind-Swept Wheat

POEMS BY

MARY AINGE DE VERE
"MADELINE BRIDGES"

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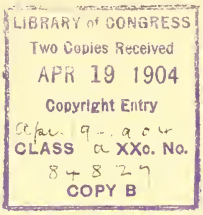

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TO

EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN

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Faint, faint and clear,
Faint as the music that in dreams we hear,
Shaking the curtain-fold of sleep
That shuts away
The world's hoarse voice, the sights and sounds
of day,
Her sorry joys, her phantoms false and fleet—
So softly, softly stirs
The winds low murmur in the rippled wheat.

From west to east
The warm breath blows, the slender heads
droop low
As if in prayer,
Again, more lightly tossed in merry play
They bend and bow and sway
With measured beat,
But never rest—through shadow and through
sun
Goes on the tender rustle of the wheat.

Dreams, more than sleep
Fall on the listening heart, and lull its care;
Dead years send back
Some treasured, unforgotten time
Ah, long ago!
When sun and sky were sweet
In happy noon —
We stood breast high, 'mid waves of ripened
grain
And heard the wind make music in the wheat.

Not for today—
Not for this hour alone, the melody
So soft and ceaseless, thrills the dreamer's ear.
Of all that was and is—of all that yet shall be
It holds a part.
Love, sorrow, longing, pain,
The restlessness that yearns,
The thirst that burns,
The bliss that like a fountain, overflows,
The deep repose,
Good that we might have known, but shall not
know—
The hope God took—the joy he made complete
Life's chords all answer from the wind-swept
wheat!

POET AND LARK

When leaves turn outward to the light,
And all the roads are fringed with green,
When larks are pouring high, unseen,
The joy they feel in song and flight,
Then, I, too, with the lark would wing
My little flight, and soaring, sing.

When larks drop downward to the nest,
And day drops downward to the sea,
And song and wing are fain to rest,
The lark's dear wisdom guideth me,
And I, too, turn within my door
Content to dream, and sing no more.

LOVE'S HOUR

Love cried to Life "Sweetheart, take hand
with me
Leave strife and traffic, toil and busy mart
Swift wheels on land, deep laden ships on sea
Thou know'st not yet, how fair, how great thou
art
Till I have kissed and crowned thy kingly head,
Thou canst not know"—Love, in sweet plead-
ing, said.

And Life looked, smiling, but with anxious
brow
As one, through tears might gaze at some soft
flower
"Thou child of sun and dew, what sayest thou?
I have no time for thee, save one brief hour."
Then Love, too, smiled, with fond eyes as be-
fore
"One hour, sweetheart? . . I have not asked
for more!"

THE SPINNER

The spinner twisted her slender thread
As she sat, and spun;
"The earth and the heavens, are mine," she said,
"And the moon and sun,
Into my web the sunlight goes,
And the breath of May—
And the crimson life of the new-blown rose
That was born to-day."

The spinner sang in the hush of noon
And her song was low,
"Ah morning, you pass away too soon,
You are swift to go.
My heart o'er-flows like a brimming cup
With its hopes and fears—
Love, come and drink the sweetness up
Ere it turn to tears."

The spinner looked at the falling sun,
"Is it time to rest?
My hands are weary—my work is done,
I have wrought my best—
I have spun and woven with patient eyes,
And with fingers fleet—
Lo! where the toil of a lifetime lies
In a winding sheet!"

THE FALSE ORACLE

She picked a little daisy flower
With fringe of snow and heart of gold,
All pure without, and warm within,
And stood to have her fortune told.

"He loves me," low, she musing said,
And plucked the border, leaf by feaf,
"A little—too much—not at all—
With fullest heart, beyond belief."

"A little—too much—not at all,"
So rang the changes o'er and o'er,
The tiny leaflets fluttered down,
And strewed the meadow's grassy floor.

"A little—too much—not at all,
With fullest heart," oh, magic brief!
Ah, foolish task, to measure out
Love's value, on a daisy leaf.

For as she plucked the latest left
With "not at all," I heard her say,
"Ah, much you know, you silly flower,
He'll love me till his dying day."

THE DOCKS AT NIGHT

The full tides lap on the rough, dark piers
As strong as fate and as salt as tears;
The wind blows in from the outer bay,
Moist with the chill of the ocean spray;
And here, where the round red sun goes down
Come the tired crowds of the toiling town.

The last warm flush of the sunset fire
Dies slowly away, from roof and spire;
The further shore is a misty dream,
Save for the bright fixed lights that gleam,
And the floating lamps of the boats that go
On the ferry pathways, to and fro.

Faint with the long day's scorching heat,
From stifling alley and dusty street,
In eager swarms, through the twilight dim,
They throng to the river's tranquil brim,
And feel the breath of its vesper calm
Like benediction of prayer and psalm.

Here in this place, astir all day
With loaded wagon and lumbering dray,
The mothers sit and the babies sleep,
And the toddling urchins roll and creep,
And the fathers smoke with their brown arms
bare
And brown chests stripped to the friendly air.

Boys and girls at their noisy plays,
Race and scamper a dozen ways;
And lovers, with clinging hand in hand,

Saunter slowly, or loitering, stand
To watch, where the shadowy sails go by
Like gliding ghosts, betwixt wave and sky.

And the vast night deepens,with blue on blue
Mid rifted clouds where the stars shine through;
And sweeter, fresher the breeze blows in—
God's breath of healing for care and sin;
While the full tides lap on the rough, dark piers
As strong as fate and as salt as tears!

LOVE'S MESSENGERS

Who will tell him? who will teach him?
Have you voices, merry birds?
Then be voice for me and read him
With a thousand pleading words—
Sing my secret east and west
Till his answer be confessed.

Roses, when you see him coming
Light of heart and strong of limb,
Make your lover-bees stop humming,
Turn your blushes round to him,
Blush, dear flowers— that he may learn
How a woman's heart can burn.

Wind—oh wind—you happy rover;
Oh, that I were half as free;
Leave your honey-bells and clover,
Go and seek my love for me.
Find,—kiss—clasp him, make him know
It is *I* who love him so!

LEARNING THE NEWS

"What's the news, my neighbor, what's the news?"
"There's no news, my neighbor, truly—none,
All is well with me—with work begun,
With wife and children, crops, and lambs and ewes."

"Thanks to God, then—there's no better word,
If the home be safe and plenty there.
Look you! beyond the maple, comes a pair
Of gay young lovers, where the corn is stirred."

"Aye, aye! Love has its place, like falling seed,
Like fruit that ripens, and like tides that roll,
It seems but yesterday when we, too, stole
From gaze of older folk, through field and mead.

Ah, we're still young enough their dream to share!
We'll turn aside, to chat, the while they pass,
The bashful couple—foolish lad and lass.
But—faith! I know that gown, that braided hair."

"And I the cap—the jacket! See, they choose
The other path. Perhaps they fear to tell—
Your girl, my boy:—and lovers?—well—well—well!
At least, my neighbor, we have learned some news!"

UNRECOGNIZED

What words are these you speek to her?
  Ah, tranquil words, and worldly wise!
You cannot see her soul astir,
  On tiptoe, in her waiting eyes.—

You come and go—you touch her hair,
  The ring upon her slender hand;
The smiling trouble of her air,
  You note, but cannot understand.

You cannot understand. Ah, so
  Our foolish hearts make sport of Fate!
We sit, and dream, while love bends low
  A kingly beggar, at the gate.

WHERE?

Love cried to Constancy "Oh, stay with me
  Past the sad changing years, till hair be white
  And lost the dear remembrance of delight—
All will be well, whate'ers the time or place
  So thou but stay with me." . . Then, in love's
      lifted face
  Looked Constancy, sad smiling, "Stay with
      thee,
Thou winged sprite? . . Alas, where wilt *thou*
      be?"

INCREDULITY

You love my soul? It may be so;
    But answer me, and speak the truth:
What spark can kindle passion's glow
    Apart from youth?

If I were changed by time and care,
    Grown old, and sorrow-wise, and cold,
With silver gleaming from my hair
    In place of gold,

And all this lovely outward mask
    Of bloom and freshness laid aside,
The while my soul, by toil and task
    Thrice purified,

Strong in her immortality,
    Made beautiful by love and trust,
Eager, as prisoned bird, to flee
    Her house of dust,—

Oh, you—would you come sighing still,
    In hope and fear, heart-gifts to bring?
A master kneeling to my will,
    A servant who would fain be king?

And would you covet day by day
    My lightest word, and look, and touch?
Ah, friend, forgive me if I say,
    I doubt it much!

THE ROSE

Out of the bud the bright rose bloweth
And all the soul of her sweetness goeth
Abroad to the sun, and wind, and rain;
But ah, ah never, in any weather
Can she fold up her leaves together
And close herself in a bud again.

But if the sun and wind be sweeter
And summer's beautiful dress completer
Because of the rose's graceful part,
Were it not wiser far, and better,
Than, closed and locked in her fair green fetter,
To die, with an untouched virgin heart?

SAD SPRING

Sometime green leaves will grow and happy birds
Find glad new songs, to sing beside the nest.
Sometime again, the wind will breathe sweet words
Among the blossomed trees, from east to west.

But ah, but ah, when violets bud and blow
Upon a grave . . . when birds their music pour
While one dear nest is empty—I think that so
Spring must be sad to me forever-more.

NOT THINE, NOR MINE

Not thine to give, nor mine, dear heart, to take
The love that, lost between us, lies unowned—
While we two stand, with yearning eyes that ache,
And lips that thirst, and asking hearts that break;
We, for sin's sweetness, had we thus atoned
Might hold our souls up, white, as God's own soul.
But of long self-denial, struggle, prayer,
And truest chastity, this is the dole,—
This bare, bleak poverty. . . . We stand and wait,
Outcast to beggary, nor dare complain—
Though, still before our eyes, tempting and fair,
To make us rich as ransomed kings—aye, more!
Happy as angels within heaven's door—
The unclaimed treasure mocks us—useless, vain—
Low, in the common dust where it was thrown,
Not mine, nor thine, yet once our very own!

BABY

Baby, baby on my breast
Oh my little one, sleep sound,
While the red clouds light the west
And the bright leaves light the ground
Mother's love is round you here—
God's love, too, is close and near,
Full and happy be your rest,
Baby—baby on my breast!

Baby, baby at my knee
Lift your eyes up, let them show
All the dreams I cannot see—
Talk and tell me—make me know—
How the world's dim puzzles seem,
To your young soul's waking dream.
Bring your marvels all to me
Baby, baby at my knee.

Baby, baby by my side
Ah, your cheek just reaches mine,
So—time will not be denied—
Glossy braids are smooth and fine,
And I read within your eyes,
Womanhood's fair mysteries—
Baby—Baby—by my side,
Tall enough to be a bride!

Baby—baby—far from me
Lines of care have crossed your brow,
Little children climb your knee
Fill your heart and household, now—
"Mother" is my baby's name—
Yet, to me, she's still the same;
Still the child I rocked to rest,
As a baby on my brest!

THE DIFFERENCE

Touch me, clasp me, and hold me fast
But warm and near as your love may hold me
And close as your clinging clasp may fold me
Time laughs it away, and it cannot last.

Grieve me, leave me, but, if you give
The thought of your heart, in any fashion,
In words of wisdom or words of passion,
It stays with me, while I breathe and live.

THE SOUL'S QUEST

A soul slipped into heaven, and fared, seeking high and low
Among the chosen stainless throng, where stand the good and fair,
With child-like brows, and still, calm lips, and garments white as snow—
The radiance dazzled his sad eyes. His poor love was not there.

"Whom dost thou seek? they asked of him. Ashamed, he hung his head.
"One chaste and noble, high of aim?" Trembling, he answered, "No;
A little human creature, full of sin," he, sobbing said.
"She loved me, and I seek her here because —I loved her so!"

Then, at the word, out came to him the fairest of the band—
"Look in my face!" He looked and knelt. "Yea, I have been forgiven;
Rise, thou, and ask forgiveness"—she drew him by the hand.
"Ask, in Love's name; you will receive. Love is the gate of heaven!"

WHEN THE MOST IS SAID

What's love, when the most is said? The flash
of the lighting fleet,
Then, darkness that shrouds the soul—but the
earth is firm to my feet,
The rocks and the tides endure, the grasses and
herbs return,
The path to my foot is sure, and the sods to my
bosom yearn.

What's fame when the truth is told? A shout
to a distant hill,
The craigs may echo a while, but fainter, and
fainter, still—
Yet, forever the wind blows wide, the sweetness
of all the skies,
The rain cries and the snow flies, and the storm
in its bosom lies.

What's life, what's life, little heart? A dream
when the night are long,
Toil in the waking days—tears, and a kiss a
song:
What's life? what's life, little heart? To beat
and be glad of breath
While death waits on either side, before and
behind us, Death!

THE NEWSBOY

God's grace be with you, fearless elf!
The city streets are strange and wild,
And yet, quite by your dauntless self,
You tread the mazes, little child!
The sea's blue dream is in your eyes,
Your brown cheek shows health's ruddy rose
And where the deepest crimson lies,
A baby dimple comes and goes.

I watch you as you dive and dart
Over the roadway's crowded space,
Hanging on car and dodging cart,—
A gamin, with a cherub's face,
A gamin, with a cherub's soul!
'Twas such a little time ago
You slipped the angel's sweet control,
Earth's fitful, wearying life to know.

What is there in the years for you?
The place of master, or of slave?
Good to attain, or ill to rue?
Perchance, a tiny wayside grave.
Oh, small, strong soul! yet life seems gay
Where your feet pass; and greed and pelf
Pause, as I pause, to smile and say
"God's grace be with you, fearless elf!"

HER MILKING PAIL

When Doris took her milking pail
To cross the dewy meadow;
The eastern sky was golden pale,
The valley lay in shadow;
I followed slowly, not too near,
And softly, lest the maid should hear.

The wet, white daisies bent to touch
Her slender foot, and kiss it;—
I envied them this pleasure, much,
Since I'd been doomed to miss it;
And thought the flowers were treated far
More kindly than some lovers are!

Behind a thorn I stood to watch
Her coax the cow, and chide her;
And humming at a merry catch,
Set the small stool beside her;
While freshly, as she could have wished
The milk through dimpled fingers swished.

Thought I, "This chance I must not miss!
Her milk pail home I'll carry;—
And in return, demand a kiss,
For milkmaids are not chary;
The poets sing: If swains be brave,
Hence, my reward I'll boldly crave.

But when at length I would have stept
Toward the maid with fervor,
Young Stephen o'er the hedge had leapt
With like intent to serve her;

And lest his chance might later fail,
Took, first, a kiss, and then, the pail!

Unseen, I sought a shaded path,
And left the lovers cooing;—
But now my verse a moral hath:
Whatever's worth the doing
You'll find,—each day the story tells,—
Is being done by some one else!

CONJUNCTIONS

I am a happy woman? Yes.
The measure of my happiness
Fates bounty can no higher fill,
I surely happy am—yet still—

My brown hair has no silver thread,
My clear cheek shows its white and red,
As fairest in the eyes of men,
My love hath chosen me. But then.—

My work is sweet. Great meed of praise
Makes bright the sunshine of my days:
In pleasant paths my feet are set,
Friends guard me tenderly. And yet—

The robin flutters to the hedge,
The sparrow seeks the window ledge,
The eagle rests upon the cliff,
My place is here. But if—but if—

With loitering steps along the grass
I see the village lovers pass
And mind me once—ah, yes, I know
The sweetest dream must fade. And so—

LOVE'S WAKING

Love lies asleep. What dreams be round him
thronging,
Poets may guess.
But he is tired of hope and fear—of longing—
Of passion's stress—
Tired, through long years, from the world's
first beginning—
Too tired to wake,

At Wealth's loud call, at Beauty's whisper, winning,
Or answer make,
Though king command, and minstrel, in true
metre,
Plead, praise and weep—
Than anything on earth, ah, rest is sweeter!
Love lies asleep.

Lo! two young pilgrims come from woodland
closes,
Barefoot, yet gay,
Clothed with scarce else than garland-veils of
roses,
Sweet beggars, they—
Full of health's bliss, of life, of joy, immortal,
Untouched by sin,
Who know not why they sing beside Love's
portal
Till Love joins in.

THE SONG OF THE BROOK

Oh, listen! hush!
As lightening down its path among the grasses,
"Neath brier and spreading bush
Hidden, and fleet
On silvery feet,
The swift brook passes.

Unseen, but heard—
Heard with rapt heart, and brain, and eyes that
listen;
Oh, the clear, wild refrain!
The sighs; the rippled laughter;
The songs which have no word
That poet's happiest rime can follow after
Nor truest harp intone;

The low, sweet, stammering talk against the
pebbles
That wait to catch
And break its deeper sound in quivering trebles;
The silence,—sudden, strange, that seems to
snatch
All this glad music to its deep, still heart,
Just for a breath, apart!

Oh, listen! hark!
The woodland voices here imprisoned blended;
The sway of leaves; the ringing tone and
splendid
Of mounting lark;
The timid, coaxing chirp that warns the nes-
tling;

The cleft branch, crashing through the startled air;
The ceaseless stir and soft, mysterious rustling
Of hidden insect life,
In bark and twig, in moss and crevice moving,—
A voiceless world of toil, perchance, and strife,
Perchance of joy and hope, and happy loving.
Hark! the ripe, dropping nuts; the squirrel's chattering calls,
And sounds of dancing feet, as fauns were keeping
Time to the music of its liquid falls
That ever oceanward go leaping, sweeping
Over low, mossy walls,
Down rocky ledges,
Past swirling vines and through the bending sedges.

Strange that the woodland's song, and spelt-out story,
So full and clear,
So whole and rounded to the poet's ear,
Should lose its deep significance and be
Only a breath, a tone—
One of the many mumurs of the sea!

And so, my brook, good-by!
Dumb distance takes thy song, with echo blending
Ripple by ripple, sigh by lingering sigh,
And tear by tear—at last, in silence, ending.
And there is left to me
Only the memory
That fills my soul, still, with thy melody.

ONCE

Cool salt air and the white waves breaking
Restless, eager, along the strand—
An evening sky and a sunset glory,
Fading over the sea and land.

We two sitting alone together,
Side by side in the waning light,
Before us the throbbing waste of water,
Behind us, the sand heaps, drifted white.

Ships were sailing into the distance
Down to the land where the sun had gone;
The rough fresh wind blew o'er our faces,
The shadows of night crept slowly on.

Is it a dream that I remember?
Some ghost of a hope that will come no more,
We two sitting alone together,
Hand in hand, on the ocean shore?

THE POSTMAN

ST. VALENTINE'S DAY.

How fast the postman goes
Laden with joys and woes
    Along the street!
Young eyes watch with delight;
Eyes, not so young, with quite
    As quick pulse-beat.

He carries painted hearts
Transfixed with harmless darts:
    Live hearts too hide
Stowed in his swinging bag
And doubtless make it wag
    From side to side.

Here, prayer of parted friends
And shaft that malice sends
    Elbow for space;
The pang that hurts and stings,
The balm that healing brings,
    Run equal race.

A scentless rose, a verse
That hardly could be worse,
    A soul's despair,
A tear blot, and a jest,
A happy love confessed,
    A laugh, a prayer!

Is he a man or elf?
Pandora's box itself
Could scarce send wide
Such motley crowd and fleet,
Save that gifts fair and sweet
Its ills divide!

Bird-like, he mounts and swoops
Swift up and down the stoops;
He's drawing near.
Though I may moralize,
I, too, have waiting eyes—
Oh, please stop *here!*

IN ABSENCE

God keep you, dearest, all this lonely night;
The winds are still,
The moon drops down behind the western hill;
God keep you, safely, dearest, till the light.

God keep you, then when slumber melts away,
And care and strife
Take up new arms, to fret our waking life;
God keep you through the battle of the day.

God keep you. Nay, beloved soul, how vain,
How poor is prayer!
I can but say again, and yet again,
God keep you every time and everywhere.

MY LOVE

My little love! When she is meek
And talks of prayer and penance lowly,
Her silken eyelash on her cheek,
I love her then with love as holy,
As free from earthly stain or taint
As monk might give to shrinèd saint.

My winsome love! When she's inclined
To view life more in aspects human,
I'm very glad, indeed, to find
That she can be so much a woman;
I love her for the love she gives,
And think no sweeter being lives.

My naughty love! But when she laughs,
Intent to puzzle and displease me,
When merciless, she guys and chaffs,
And does her charming best to tease me,—
'Tis very strange this should befall,
That then I loved her best of all!

MISSENT

Up, up the eager waves come with
dimpled, coaxing faces,
And push against the grim old rocks
In sudden little shocks,
And yearning sweet embraces!

But cold, cold the rocks stand, against
their winning graces
Unmoved, and sad and discontent—
It seems that love is sent
Sometimes, to the wrong places.

FAITH TREMBLING

Were I a happy bird
  Building my little nest each early spring,
It might be easy then to keep God's word,
  His praise to sing;
Easy to live content,
  Tending my little ones—of love secure,
Knowing no agony for time misspent,
  Or thought impure!

Were I a butterfly,
  A bright winged creature of the sunshine
    born
Idle and lovely I could live and die
  Without self-scorn;
I need not fear
  To take my utmost will of summer sweet—
Nor dread when the swift end came near,
  My Judge to meet!

If I were only made
  Patient, and calm, and pure, as angels are,
I had not been so doubtful—sore afraid
  Of sin and care;
It would seem sweet and good
  To bear the heavy cross that martyrs take,
The passion and the pain of womanhood
  For my Lord's sake.

But strong, and fair, and young,
I dread my glowing limbs—my heart of fire,
My soul that trembles like a harp full strung
To keen desire!
Oh, wild and idle words!
Will God's large charity and patience be
Given unto butterflies and singing birds,
And not to me?

IF

If you were safe in Heaven
And I at the outer gate,
Would our lives seem less even,
Or mine, be a harder fate?

For then, I might hope by waiting
In penance and patient prayer,
Hourly my grief relating,
Some time to enter there.

Where the lowest may look highest,
High, as a crowned king
And the farthest may come nighest,
And the saddest, be glad and sing.

But here, through my soul beseech you,
Though we may meet and speak,
I know I can never reach you,
No matter how far I seek.

TWO LOVERS

One loves me as a woman would be loved,
With hearty words, and kind insistent care,
Proclaims me frankly as most sweet and fair,
And only laughs to hear himself reproved.
He chides me gaily in my own behalf,
Jests at my faults, and scatters merry chaff
With richest grain. . . . The other silent stands
All his soul's worship waiting in his eyes.
Seldom, indeed he smiles, but often sighs,
Grows pale at friendly meeting of our hands,
And if by chance I touch him, carelessly,
He looks as if an angel passed him by.
Which seems the truer better love? . . . Ah,
me!
If only the two kinds might blended be
The human with the angel love! ah, then
We need not fear to trust the love of men.

ROSE AND VIOLET

I wonder now when leaves come back,
And blue birds chirp, and thrushes sing,
And lonely woodlands bare and black,
Put on green veils, for love of Spring,
And Winter is an ended dream—
I wonder how the world will seem
Or what dear thought the rose may bring
Of happy Summer's left behind?
What sweet word will the violet find
To say to me, if anything?
Or will they teach me to forget
My last year's rose and violet?

AUSPICIUM

Like a beautiful flying bird it came
Out of the sunshine and breath of spring;
And I never named it by any name
Half fair enough for so fair a thing.

Into my life and my heart's deep heart,
Bringing a song and a laugh, a dream,
Sweet tears, glad silence, and that strange art
That makes all shadow like sunshine seem.

Safe on my breast, with swift wing still,
And bright head nestled, it long had lain;
I could not dream that the yearning thrill
For flight, would waken ever again.

But out of my life it swept, one day,
With song and sunshine, and shadow-flame;
And I never knew by what unseen way
It came and went, nor its unnamed name.

A MARRIAGE

They stood together, he and she,
  As tenderly as lovers may
Who know the breaking dawn will be
  Their wedding day.

His flashing eyes told half his bliss;
  But hers seemed full of silent prayer,
As if a mightier voice than his
  Had named her there.

Behind the alter and the ring,
  Behind the brimming cup love holds,
Her timid soul sought wondering,
  The future's folds.

His eyes were sweet: she looked beyond
  Through waiting years of sun and rain:
His clasp was dear; she felt the bond,
  That might be pain!

Yet he all gladness, she half fear,
  Gave kisses only of delight
Love touched and brought them close and near
  That happy night.

Long afterwards he waked to doubt—
  But she, with careworn matron grace,
Shut patience in and passion out,
  And held her place.

And never thought nor word went wild
  Content if only she could see
His features in the sleeping child
  Across her knee.

Her doubt had end were his begun
She smiled, nor knew the bitter cost
At which his prison calm was won—
His freedom lost!

CONFESSION

Yes, I had loved, ere your dear face was known
I do confess it—and my life seemed set
In tender radiance, as if moonlight shone.
But, mark, sweetheart! . . the moon is not the sun,
Tis but, and always, radiance that is lent!
So, though that dream was dear, I knew it meant
Only the dream of something dearer yet—
A reflex of the greater love unwon
Waiting below my soul's dim horizon!

MY LOST SELF

You wonder why my eyes are dim with tears;
Then shall I tell you? Long and long ago,
So long ago—years piled on weary years—
There was a little child I used to know.

And every day and night and every hour
We took life's gift together, sun and shade,
And saw the rainbow shining through the shower
And heard the talk that building robins made.

We thought the world was ours, to come and go,
About its highways, finding treasures rare,
We thought all heaven was ours, and fashioned so,
Grand castle after castle, high in air!

Ah, now I find the world a desert wild!
No room in all the sky for tower mine;
But most of all I miss my comrade child,
Her brave true courage and her faith divine.

Dead? changed? I know not, sweet! I only know
That sometimes from the mirror's shining space,
In my own features, worn and faded so,
I catch a glimmer of the bright lost face.

You will no longer wonder that I weep
My little girl, with eyes, so grave and clear,
Whatever treasure we may hold or keep,
To lose one's happy self is saddest, dear!

THE POPPY'S FAULT

He plucked for me a poppy red
Among the corn,
"A sorry omen, love," I said
"This pleasant morn."
He stooped and kissed me, where we stood,
"Nay, sweet," said he
"For any omen must be good
'Twix you and me."

I wore the poppy on my breast
The livelong day,
But when the sun sank down the west
I passed that way—
And then, I saw my lover stand
(The poppy's sign)
He held a fair young maiden's hand—
Not mine—not mine!

Unseen, with breaking heart I sped,
My homeward way;
And bye and bye, the white moon shed
Her silver day;
I leaned upon the gate, and heard
With blinding tears
The timid twitter of a bird
That waking, fears!

At last a step—I seemed to dream,
My heart stood dumb
As through the moonlight's happy gleam
I saw him come.

How soon my doubt and sorrow fled
Beneath his kiss—
"It was the poppy's fault," I said
"But never his!"

A WOMAN'S THOUGHT

Dear, I would die, putting away
Life, and love's heart-beats just to know
That you would plead with me, and pray
Me, not to go.

Yea; while your tender pleading strove
And while your dear arms held me fast
I would give life to know your love
Life would outlast!

GOOD-BY, SWEETHEART

The sleep is broken, the fair dream ended—
Sweet sleep that crowned us, dear dream that blessed.
Life's faded robe may be patched and mended
For daily wear, but no more for best.

We two, poor spendthrifts, were gay together,
Deep, deep we drank of Life's richest wine;
And all our weather was Summer weather,
When I was yours, dear, and you were mine.

My eyes seemed made but to seek and find you,
My voice to name you, my hands to press,
My brain to know you, my arms to bind you,
My lips to kiss you, my heart to bless.

The rain blew by us, the stars shone o'er us—
We laughed at snow-fall, at cloud and sun;
What fear had we of the way before us?
We walked together, all roads were one.

So rich we were—but our wealth is squandered;
So gay we were—we are gay no more.
Apart and apart our feet have wandered;
Our eyes are heavy, our hearts are sore.

Good-by, my sweetheart; God love and guard you
For my poor sake, who have loved you well—
Who no more may call you, nor look toward you,
From highest heaven, nor from deepest hell!

THE UNSEEN GUIDE

Life is too long for me—I cannot bear
The dreary days and nights.
But if I share
Thy weary vigil, wilt thou still despair?

My burden weighs me down. I am not free
To haste with eager steps.
Yet I will be
Thy help and strength. Divide thy load with me.

The path is strange and rugged, and the night
Falls black along the sky.
I will be sight,
For thee, faint soul, and guide thy steps aright.

Nay, but fair homelights in the valley gleam,
And voices call.
What doth earth's splendor seem?
Better, more lasting, than the glow-worms gleam?

And is there, then, for me, nor home, nor love,
Naught but this barren way?
So thou shalt prove
The bliss God giveth to his own, above!

Thou—whom art thou that by me toilest on
Unthanked—unasked?
Friend, when thou lookest upon
My face thy place in Heaven shall be won!

THE TOUCH OF SPRING

I heard as the wind swept by me
A breath, or was it a sigh?
Something too vague for rhyming
Too tuneless for melody.

Faint, fainter than moth wings floating,
And yet as it swept along
It wrote on my heart, a poem,
And drew from my soul, a song.

A FAREWELL

I put thy hand aside, and turn away—
Why should I blame the slight and fickle heart
That cannot bravely go, nor boldly stay,
Too weak to cling, and yet too fond to part?
Dead Passion chains thee where her ashes lie.—
Cold is the shrine, ah, cold forevermore!
Why linger then, while golden moments fly
And sunshine waits beyond the open door?
Nay—fare thee well, for memory and I
Must tarry here and wait . . . . We have no choice
Nor other better joy, until we die—
Only to wait, and hear, nor step—nor voice,
Nor any happy advent come to break
The watch we keep alone—for Love's dear sake!

MY SWEETHEART'S FACE

The smoke-wreaths of my good cigar
Float out and curl and still ascend—
A world where dreams and phantoms are
When past and present softly blend.
But still, whate'er their groupings be
Whate'er imaginings I trace
Always, amid their mists I see
My little sweetheart's tender face.

I see the fringing hair above
The modest eyes whose lashes fall;
I see the little mouth I love
A crimson flower, pure, sweet, and small,
The dimpled chin, the smooth fair cheek—
Yes, every charm and gentle grace
That poets sing, or painters seek,
Are mingled in my sweetheart's face.

The Christmas bells ring glad and free—
The sledges cross the moonlit snow
Such Christmas joyance rang for me
Ah, not so very long ago!
Ah, not so very long ago,
We sped across the glittering space
To jingling bells, and nestled low
Beside me, smiled my sweetheart's face.

How gay we were! Our voices blent
In song and laughter on the air
How mute we were, in deep content
My cheek pressed warm against her hair

And all the while the happy chime
Of wild bell-melody kept pace
And now and then to help the rhyme
I kissed my little sweetheart's face,

I muse alone: a broken prayer
Lost in a sigh, breathes from my heart
May all good angles guard her where
Her pure life moves from mine apart
And still I dream, Hope cannot die!
That sometime in its rightful place
Here on my arm at rest shall lie
My little sweetheart's darling face.

CONTRADICTION

I said to you, No, and No—No—No—
Your face grew white as you heard;
Whom else in the world would have loved me so,
And—taken me at my word?

But now, to you—Yes, Yes, Yes, I say!
Ah, now that you cannot hear;
And now that your eyes are turned away,
I beckon to bring you near.

And so it goes, in this life of ours,
There is always too much at stake—
We cannot guess at the thorns, for flowers,
Nor at joy—for the hearts that break!

FATE AND LACE WORK

Of course, I loved him (One, two, three,
And slip the fourth) Dear fellow, yes!
He loved *me* madly (Now you see,
This time you take two stitches less)
Quite tall, well built, his eyes were grey.
(You pull that thread the other way.

Two loops) A dimple in his chin;
The sweetest hair! (my dear, observe)
He was a poet (these begin
The second row, and make the curve)
I'm sure you'd like to read the rhymes
He wrote me, (Round the edge three times.)

Poor boy. It was so sad to part!
He died quite young (Another one
But, not so tight.) It broke my heart—
(There, that is *very* nicely done!)
He was my first love, and—my last.
(Be careful, dear—don't go so fast)

My husband, Ah, so good and kind!
I met him (Now the pattern shows)
In Europe. We were married (Mind
That turn) Well, yes, as marriage goes,
I'm happy. (Keep the thread quite straight
Or it will tangle) Such is Fate!

A VALENTINE

"The tender dawn is beaking through the shadows:
Sweetheart, arise!
For see Love flies
With eager step across the bare brown meadows."
"Nay, nay—ah nay!
It is too soon:
You see the glimmer of the sinking moon—
Not rising day!"

"Ah, now indeed the sun is up and shining!
Make short your prayer;
Look who is there
Beneath your lattice patiently reclining!"
"Ah where, ah where?
I cannot see,
For sleep that lingers, what the wight may be—
If dark or fair."

"Put down the silken web your hands are weaving!
The moonday sun
Shines full upon
Poor weary Love, who waits and watches—grieving."
"So near—so far?
To love a maid, is that to fear her?
How strange men are!
He should be farther still or much, much nearer!"

"But now, sweet maid, but now the twilight
darkens;
Love's arms entwine
Your lattice vine."
Ah! so at last she pauses and she hearkens
And murmurs low:
"Climb not, but wait!
I come! I come, beloved—late, I know—
But not too late!"

A FREE SLAVE

She said, he was her lover—
"I would not hold you—no—
If once the dream seemed over
If once, you wished to go—

You're free, at any season,
At any moment, free!"
"But that is just the reason
You hold me fast—" said he,

REFLECTED LIGHT

Your eyes say, "Sweet, I love—I love you,
sweet."
Where is the blame
If, when their mute significance I meet,
Mine say the same?

Nay, thank me not, nor deem your triumph
near.
The message bright
My glance conveys—'tis but—believe, me,
dear—
Reflected light!

AT THE LAST

We have found Love's scope
And no more.
Need we wait, nor hope—
As before.
Let the curtain fall
Lest we see
The deserted lonely hall
Where phantoms be.

Shall I blame you, then?
Shall I chide
Moons that wax and wane,
Streams that glide?
God has made them so—
They fulfil,
So do we, dear, too,
God's wise will.

Well, you brought me Heaven
Glad, and new;
While your love was given
It was true.
Shall we pine because
Flowers decay?
Nature keeps her laws
Weep who may.

You will go the way
You have sought,
Strong, and frank and gay,
Missing naught,

Careless—not unkind,
When we meet
You will smile and find,
Memory sweet.

I too, I shall smile,
By and bye;—
With what heavenly guile,
Women lie!
Ah, if faith betrayed
Dimmed the face—
Our fair world were made
A dreary place.

I shall smile and keep
Calm, profound—
None will guess how deep,
Goes the wound—
Quick dear, make an end
Ere my heart,
Break, to call you *friend*
Let us part.

A WOUND

Words may be shafts that wound with piercing
dart
When anger severs heart from yearning
heart,
Yet gladly will he bear their pain who knows
How deeper far the hurt of silence goes.

A BRIDAL

If your strong love hold
And clothe me in its fold,
Give my cheeks the red,
And keep the rain from my head—
Warm me in the snow,
And cool me, in the glow,
Guard and save me still
From all pain and ill—
This, if you can do,—
To make your promise true
You will do far more
Than e'er man did before!

Nay—yet take my hand;
Like children here we stand,
The road winds far away,
Where we must wend today,
And the dear farewells made,
Can never be unsaid.

Beyond the open gate,
What joys—what sorrows wait?
What treasures shall we find
Who leave so much behind—
Youth—home—the place we knew,
The trust long proven true,
The love, that like the sun,
With our first day begun,
The laughter and the tears,
Of childhood's long sweet years.

Ah, love, howe'er it be,
Yet say a prayer with me
A little humble prayer
For God's good watchful care—
So we will go one way,
Stay near me, love, oh stay,
Through all the journey's length,
And cheer me with your strength,
Your word, and smile and touch,
But—do not promise much!

BESIDE THE SEA

Beside the sea one summer day
Three merry children were at play.

The great warm sun was sinking low,
The waves were beating to and fro.

And silvery shells and pebbles white
Lay glittering in the rosy light.

Around the rocks, like ribbons hung,
The pretty fringing set-moss clung.

And green sea-grasses gently swayed
With every throb the ripples made;

And like a snow-field, smooth and wide,
The beach sloped down to meet the tide.

Ah me! that hour was passing sweet—
Afar from town and crowded street,

To look across the ocean's space,
And feel the rough wind on my face:

To hear the ripple's measured song,
The children's voices, fresh and strong,

Half drowning on the eager breeze
The old, old music of the seas!

O merry hearts! O voices glad!
The sad sea is no longer sad.

A charm is lent to rock and wave
More fair than Nature ever gave,

The while your joyance echoes so,
And light young footsteps come and go.

Dear happy-hearted children three,
At play beside the summer sea!

IN THE SITTER'S CHAIR

Your eyes were mine and your smile was mine,
The nut-brown fringes above your brow,
The curve of your cheek, and the tender line
From chin to bosom, I see it now,
Where I folded the soft blue drapery down,
And pinned a cluster of lilies fair;
How softly the noise of the toiling town
Came to us, sitting in silence there.

We two alone, and the hour was mine
Mine most dearly in memory yet!
And you, with your delicate sense and fine
Sweet, subtile fancy, do you forget?
Nay—sure as ever a lily's face
Blooms warm before you, ah, back you go,
And seat yourself in the sitter's place
In the sunlit garret of long ago.

What plans I fashioned—What hopes and
dreams,
My castles that vanished so soon in air!
But most like a beautiful dream it seems
Sweet, to remember you, posing there—
A dream that is far more real and true
Than most of the things I own to-day,
For still, with a thought I can summon you
And hear and answer the words you say.

And so after all, though the space be wide
That time and distance have set between,
And lofty the ramparts of wealth and pride
That guard and compass you like a queen,—
Still you come back to me, good as fair,
Meek, like a woman, yet half divine,
And I pose you again in the sitter's chair,
And your eyes, and your smile, and your soul
are mine!

A BROKEN THREAD

The leaf has fallen from the tree,
The bird has flown beyond the sea,
The flower, its breath and color spent,
Again with hueless dust is blent —
Of all my vision feasted on,
The husk is left, the soul is gone—
I weep and say—"God's will be done."

For what God gave was all his best—
The merry music of the nest,
Flowers in the loneliest solitude
And pathways through the densest wood,
Clear waters, laughing in the sun,
And fruits, red-ripening one by one
Told how God's blessed will was done.

Yet, better than His best was this—
The touch that stilled my heart,—the kiss
That filled my soul's deep waiting cup,
As dawn-dew fills the lily up—
Eyes whose long glances, gladly won,
Seemed never ended nor begun,
But always mine—"God's will be done."

God's will—His will that gave the joy
He takes again, ere aught should cloy,
Or too much sweetness sate the sense
And change to cold indifference—
The utmost race, untried—unwon—
Untouched the goal we counted on,
He bids us pause . . . His will be done!

Oh blessed soul—what lot is thine
For whom the heavenly tapers shine!
Who leavest flower and nest and song,
The paths of Heaven to move along—
Thou whose fine thread so slender grown
Has snapt apart, too quickly spun—
God holds both ends—His will be done!

JULY: THE YEAR'S SWEETHEART

All things beautiful love her:
  The butterflies light and fleet,
The branches that bend above her,
  The mosses that kiss her feet:
The ripening grain in the meadow
  The birds, singing sweet and near.
The opened flowers in the shadow,
  The brook, with its ripple clear:
The bee, in his clover sleeping,
  The locusts, that drone and whir.
The rain from the hills, down-sweeping,
  And the clouds—are in love with her!
For she, oh, the shy new-comer,
  So dear to the world, so dear!
Is heart of the heart of Summer,
  And sweetheart of all the year.

A CHORD

"I love you, dear!" When I have said the words
My lips are dumb, speech has been beggared quite—
As if some mastering hand had swept the chords
Of all my life, into one chord of might,
That rang and snapt! . . And I, the quivering lute
Throbbing with music still, must evermore be mute!

AUTUMN MUSIC

This is the path—here, where the fence-rails lie
Across the withered fern,
Down-trodden now and dry;
And look, against the cool, dark, azure sky
How warmly, brilliantly
The vivid autumn splendors glow and burn.
Oh, the sweet silence! When we came in spring
Do you remember how glad bursts of song
Rang, greeting us, and echoing
The shadowy long-drawn aisles among?
How everywhere
Bird called to bird with eager, questioning cry.
Now all is still
Save where our rapid feet,
'Mid the crisp leaves and rustling brushwood
hieing,
Send startled echoes through the forest flying.
Hush! step more softly, yet more softly, sweet!
Nay, pause a moment. Listening, we shall hear
Divinest music thrilling far and near;
The heart of nature throbbing, beat by beat!
Hark to the wind's low, earnest sighing,
Solemn as voice of prayer;
The tender murmur of the hidden rill,
The sound of ripe nuts dropping here and there;
Far off a dreamy bird-song swelling, dying;
Some scarce-remembered strain,
Half joy, half pain,
Telling how fair
But how beloved in vain,
(The old, old, story!)
Was the dear ended summer, whose swift glory
Dies out, forgotten, lonely, in its wane!

MY LITTLE WIFE

I love her for her willful ways,
Bright tears, impetuous words of praise;
For flashing angers, lightning fleet,
For questioning looks, for kisses sweet;
I love her when she laughs, and when
She frowns—oh, how I love her then!

She is not prudent, meek nor wise;
Not such a jewel as they prize
Who seek perfection in the form
Of lovely woman. Sun and storm
And fire and frost in her combine;
But, oh, I'm very glad she's mine.

Her changing moods are hard to gauge—
Now wildly gay, now mildly sage,
Now brisk and busy all about,
Now fast asleep, now going out,
Now wiping tears away, perplext,
Next making tea, and singing next.

But she is at her loveliest best
When day is done and time for rest
Draws near, and sleep hangs in her eyes
Like waiting snow in wintry skies;
And when she kneels to say her prayer
My worldly heart kneels with her there.

WHEREVER YOU ARE

If only I could be with you, dear, with you
wherever you are,
I would not care where our feet might fare,
under what sun or star
So that my hand might reach your hand, and
our step keep true and sure
By any sea, or through any land, while life for
us both endure.

If only I could be with you—ah, the cloudiest
sky were blue!
The roughest path that the wild waste hath
would be smooth if I walked with you
I'd stoop to drink from the running brook, I'd
feed from the berry-spray,
For my soul could live on your tender look
whenever it turned my way.

If only I could be with you, dear, when day is
done, and the night
Comes down out of heaven, so kind and near,
to fold us away from sight.
Your pillow would be my faithful breast, and
when we had knelt, in prayer,
Ah, what would matter, the place of rest so that
we both were there?

Dear, I would leave a throne for you, and my
kingdom's door ajar,
To seek and find you, the broad earth through,
and be—wherever you are,

While the swift days fly, and the slow years die,
only no more to part!
Ah, small is the world, yet wide, wide, wide, its
space between heart and heart!

YEARS OF DISCRETION

Years of discretion surely are
Life's full and sweet completion;—
But wilful Fate delights to mar,
For, when we reach them, there's a jar.
The years are more apparent, far,
Than the discretion!

A BREATH

A breath can fan love's flame to burning—
Make firm resolve of trembling doubt,
But strange! at fickle fancy's turning,
The self same breath can blow it out.

SINCE YESTERDAY

"Be calm, be comforted," they say,
Such words I, too, at times, have said
When others mourned above their dead.
I, too, for others' grief made moan,
Who have no tears now for mine own,
For all is changed since yesterday.

I know the little face is sweet,
Lying asleep in its last sleep—
I look and smile, I cannot weep —
So angel-fair the features seem,
So dreamless is this marble dream,
With folded hands and resting feet.

Kind friends condole with tender fears,
Whom is this sobbing? One whose pain
Of long ago comes back again—
To sorrow for my loss and say,
"My child was taken." So, for aye,
Grief lives through years and weary years!

Nay, if I cannot look away,
What wonder? Backward turn my eyes
To that lost land where sunshine lies
Behind me—evermore behind.
What should I find, or hope to find?
My hope was ended yesterday.

The way I walked—but not alone—
Was sweet with bird songs in the trees,
And laughing tones rang down the breeze,
Loud, childish music, wild with glee;
God's happy world seemed Heaven to me,—
The way is dark and Heaven is gone!

"Be strong, be calm, take comfort!" Nay,
But I will ask for tears, instead;
Too weep, and weep, uncomforted,
To let my heart dissolve and give
Its life, that no more cares to live,
Since life itself went yesterday.

O blessed Mother, plead and pray
For me, a mother desolate!
I wait alone, as thou didst wait.
Plead, pray for me, who seek for naught
And have no thought beyond this thought—
My little child died yesterday.

INLAND

When the blue dawns of summer mornings change
To brooding warmth of sunrise, spreading bright;
And long, sweet shadows down the levels range;
And all the crags and uplands laugh in light,
I long then for the music of the sea
Breaking against its shore, with songs for me!

When the tired glory of the drowsy noon
Shuts inward half the life that thrills my heart;
And brings, to dreamy eyes, the sleep too soon
That folds me, from the outward world apart,
In that strange hour I hear the rhythmic sweep,
Of strong incoming tides, so cool—so deep!

In rose-gray twilight, when the mists of dew
Half-veil the white star-blossoms of the sky;
And the clear tender wind breathes slowly through
My curtain fold, with tuneless melody,
I listen till I catch the tone divine
Of sea-songs, far away, but always mine!

THE POET'S WIFE

She brings her pretty knitting (bless her!)
Or mystic threads for making laces,
That by-and by will serve to dress her
In new and, no doubt, charming graces.
She sits and rocks, her rocker chiming
In measured cadence to my rhyming.

Sometimes with eye that proudly glistens
I read a sonnet I have written;
She counts her stiches while she listens,
Or pulls a thread to make it fit in—
And, with her gaze intent upon it,
Asks "what they pay for a sonnet?"

She little knows of rhyme or metre
And cares still less, but asks me whether
Chiffon and roses would look sweeter
To trim her hat, than jet and feather?
And while I'm "framing odes to Cupid"
She tell me "Poetry is stupid!"

But oh, her eyes! . . . Her silken lashes—
Her hair's sweet mutinies . . the dimple
In cheek and chin . . . the outward flashes
Of inward smiles . . her tranquil, simple,
Entrancing air! . . . Did she but know it—
She is the reason I'm a poet!

THE CROCUS

The flowers were dreaming, all fast asleep—
For the warm brown earth is a pleasant bed,
When suddenly breaking their slumbers deep,
They heard a patter just over head—
Like the tramp of a million fairy feet
Or tapping fingers, that beat and beat!

Who knocks so loudly? the wild rose said;
The pansy opened her purple eyes,
And stared through the darkness, in mute surprise.
Fair timid lily with saint like grace,
Crossed herself and began to pray—
The violet stirred in her drowsey nest—
"'Tis quite too early for me to rise
There is not so much as a gleam of day,"
Then turned on her pillow, and slept again.

Fair daffodil yawned and covered her face,
Hypatrica murmured "oh hush—be still,
We need not wake till the blue birds trill."
But dear little crocus meek, and good,
Rose out of her quiet resting place.
"I hear the knock of the wild March rain,
'Tis time for me to be up and dressed."
She wrapped herself in her warm green vest
And shivering pulled on her yellow hood.
And slid the bolt of the heavy door,
And pushed her way through melting snow
Through showers that patter and winds that blow

Into the bare bleak world to bring
The wonderful, beautiful news of Spring.

Some children scampering home from school,
Stopped that day near the woodland pool,
And laughed and shouted with joy—for there,
Out of a snow-wreath peeping fair
A dear little crocus bravely stood,
And smiled to herself in her yellow hood.

SEA LOVERS

Come let us fare together
  Into that clear, blue world,
The tide that no fate can tether—
  With the sails of our souls unfurled,
Let us drift into any weather—
  Come, let us find a path,
Such as the mermaid hath—
  With pebbles and shells impearled.

We will float down the foam-swept spaces,
  We will hide by the crystal walls,
Till they break in our cool, moist faces,
  With a rush as of waterfalls—
Or, of tears in Love's tempest driven,—
  Love with us there alone,
Half the world for our own
  And the whole of Heaven!

Beggars, we may not borrow,
Spendthrifts, we cannot pay,
But come!—There's no sweet to-morrow
  As sure as our dear to-day,

There is not a cloud to shade us
  Not a boat sail near nor far—
And, we are as God has made us,
  Woman and man we are!

Come, for the world's ways grieve us
  Hot are the blinding sands,
The hours, and the days bereave us,
  Clasp with me gladsome hands,
And go by sweet height and hollow,
  Where never a milestone is,
Pointing the way to bliss—
  Our swift feet find and follow.

We will buffet the waves and beat them,
  Rest with them, cheek to cheek,
Rush with them, meet them, greet them,
  Flee from them, when they seek—
Lips with their passion glowing,
  Living, loving anew,
Shall we spare them a kiss or two
  From our heart's wild overflowing?

Come! If we leave behind us,
  Loads too heavy to bear,
Fetters that strain and bind us
In the rags that we used to wear,
From tumult and toil and pain,
  Taking the way that is nearest,
What matters it, heart, my dearest,
  If we come not back again?

FIRST AND LAST

"But tell me, dear," she said,
And coaxingly the soft eyes shone,
And shyly drooped the modest head
beside his own—
"But tell me, *have* you loved before,
Or one, or more?"

The eager sparkling face
Was full of tender, trusting grace;
She did not fear his answer, then,
Her king of men!
"But tell me, dear, the best and worst—
Or—am I first?"

He turned his eyes away,
Yet closer still her hand he pressed,
Nor answered yea, nor nay,
A blush confessed
All, in one burning word
Unsaid—unheard!

Quick came a burst of tears,
A tempest from an April sky,
And then—"Forgive my doubts and fears."
He heard her sigh,
"Why should I care what loves are past
So mine be last?"

THE ENDLESS STORY

A freshening wind, an April shadow,
A bird's song trilling clear and fast,
A gleam of violets from the meadow,
A builded nest—and the Spring is past.

Warm golden blooms that break asunder,
The calm of a full perfection won
A lightning spark—a crash of thunder,
And rose-leaves scattered—the Summer's done.

Light thistle-downs through the blue air flying,
Swift wandering leaves of gold and red,
An empty nest by the wayside lying—
A mateless bird! Ah, fair Autumn's dead!

A bright white world! Soft snow wreaths blowing,
And fringed eaves dropping in the sun,
Then floating ice to the great sea going,
And the endless story is again begun.

A QUIET HOUSE

My house is quiet now, so still!
All day I hear the ticking clock,
The hours are numbered clear and shrill.
Outside the robins chirp and trill
My house is quiet now, so still!

But silence breaks my heart. I wait
And waiting yearn for call or knock,
To hear the creaking of the gate—
And footsteps coming soon, or late.
The silence breaks my heart. I wait!

All through the empty house I go.
From hall to hall, from room to room
The heavy shadows spread and grow,
The startled echoes mock me so,
As through the empty house I go.

Oh, silent house! If I could hear
Sweet noises in the tranquil gloom,
The joyful tumult, loud and near
That vexed me, many a happy year,
Ah, silent house—if I could hear!

Ah blessed heaven, if once, once more
My longing eyes might see the stain
Of little footprints on the floor
The sweet child faces at the door,
Ah, pitying Heaven, but once, once more!

My house and home are very still,
I watch the sunshine and the rain,
The years go on... Perhaps Death will
Life's broken promises fulfill.
My house, my home, my heart, are still!

A WOMAN'S GIFTS

First I would give thee—nay, I may and will,
Thoughts, memory, prayers, a sacred wealth
unguessed,
My soul's own glad and beautiful bequest,
Conveyed in voiceless reverence, deep and still,
As angles give their thoughts and prayers to
God!
Next I would yield, in service freely made,
All of my days and years, thy needs to fill;
To bear or heavy cross, or thorny rod,
Glad of my bondage, deeming it most meet:
Oh mystery of love, as strange as sweet,
That love from its own wealth should be repaid!
Last, I would give thee, if it pleased thee so,
And for thy pleasure, wishing it increased,
My woman's beauty, heart and lips aglow;
But this, dear, last—so soon its charm must
fade,
It is, indeed, of all my gifts, the least!

BLUE EYES AND BROWN

I

Blue eyes! A mountain stream
Is not more blue;
She trifles with her cream
As women do
And I,—I smoke and dream
Contented, too.

II

She wears my wedding ring,
She is my own;
Yet swift, on sudden wing
My thought has flown
Back, where wild roses cling
And hay is mown.

III

The slowly-brightening moon
(How beats my heart!)
Rises, too fair—too soon—
They have no art
To lengthen time's scant boon
Who kiss and part.

IV

I kissed her mouth, and hair
Her lids, that fell
Drowned in quick tears, that bear
The heart's farewell.
Of love's last sweet despair
What tongue can tell?

V

Blue eyes! Alas, alas,
For dear brown eyes,
For roses in the grass
And moonlit skies,
For time beloved that was,
And sad goodbyes!

VI

Alas! while through the haze
Of my cigar
Blue eyes send tranquil rays,
My heart, afar,
Wanders, a wild-rose maze,
Where brown eyes are.

AFTERTHOUGHT

But if—suppose it true—
These eyes so near
Were brown instead of blue,
Warm, more than clear,
Perhaps—who knows?—my sighs
Might still float down
The past, in search of eyes
That were *not* brown!

WE TWO

Strangers, but a week before
Giving pleasant word for word,
Smile for smile, and nothing more.
Can you tell, what look, or tone
First this tide of feeling stirred?
What strange tremor broke the calm
Of our friendly greeting—gave
Such tumultious wild delight
In the meeting of the eyes—
And the touch of palm to palm?
All the gladness of good-day—
All the passion of good-night?
Was it, then, a swift suprise
To your soul, as to my own?
Did you watch the words unsaid
On my lips, and dream, awake,
All the long night—for my sake—
Lost, in fancy's eager bliss
At the phantom of a kiss?
Was it not enough for years
Wealth enough, to last till death—
This strong love, beyond control,
That so blent us—soul with soul,
Pulse with pulse—and breath with breath?

One brief meeting at the last—
Once, your strong arms round me cast,
Hurried words, and burning tears,
Kisses—ah, how sweeter far
Than the dreams of kisses are!
Last—good bye—but no one knew
What we found—and lost—we two!

PEGGY

Peggy! Who wrought this saucy name
From stately Margaret?
Methinks, in laughter's chime it came,
To reckless music set.
Who was the lover, knave or poet
That dared first in this guise to show it?

Peggy! The sound is sweet and odd,
Like quaint, wild note of bird,
Or quick foot dancing on a sod;
Yet nothing ever heard
Quite echoes Peggy. Who could breathe it
And not in graceful rhythm wreathe it?

Peggy! Its syllables transform
Proud Margaret's queenly grace
To milkmaid beauty, wild and warm,
Of sun-kissed brow and face,
In green Arcadian lanes coquetting
With rustic swains, her path besetting.

Peggy! But of one thing I'm sure:
A great deal's in a name!
Margaret had never proved the lure
That Peggy swift became.
I knew at once Love could not err in
The blindest pathway he saw her in!

WILD VIOLETS

They smell of the rain, the sun and breeze;
Of the long, cool shadows of cedar trees;
Of the brook that sings down its mossy ledge,
Of the bending ferns and the rustling sedge;
Of velvet mosses that keep the dew;
And of sweet dead leaves that last year knew.

They smell of the chill, pure breath of dawn;
Of wind-swept hillside and sunswept lawn;
Of rose-briar hedge and of winding lane;
And—of dreams that will never come back
again,
These wild, pale violets, faint and sweet,
That we buy in the crowded city street!

FRIEND AND LOVER

When Psyche's friend becomes her lover
How sweetly these conditions blend:
But oh! what anguish to discover
Her lover has become—her friend!

ANDY'S WIDDA

We allus fix his grave up good
  Car'line 'n' me—at least she does.
Poor Andy! When he fell I stood
  Right by him—so—as if it wuz
Me here—him there. I broke his fall
With a quick grab, but—that wuz all—
  He left his wife a widda.

'N' that wuz what he dreaded, too,
  From firs' to las'. He used to say
"Oh, you're all right. Ef I wuz you
  I wouldn't car' much either way;
But when you know you're goin' to leave
Some one behind to fret 'n' grieve
  'N' live a lonely widda!"

He had her pictur'—jes' a girl,
  A pleasant young thing—well enough;
But Andy 'lowed she were the pearl;
  The best, tip-topest kind of stuff!
He used to look 'n' look 'n' smile
'N' say, "Old boy! she ain't the style
  Now, is she, for a widda?"

'N' my! I got that pictur' yet
  I kep' it kinder for his sake
When I fetched home his things 'n' met
  His folks 'n'—her. I hed to break
The news 'n' mighty hard to do,
Seein' I'd [illegible]g poor Andy too,
  Home to his little widda.

Hard work, I tell ye, boys, that's so!
'N' sakes! ye'd oughter heard her cry!
Be good 'n' glad you didn't though,
But—well, she ca'med down by 'n' by,
'N' then I hed to tell about
Jes' how the whole blame scrape come out
To that inquirin' widda.

'N' so on Decoration day
I git his grave up extra fine,
Or—Car'line does. I hev to stay
Most of the time in marchin' line —
A-filin' here, salutin' there—
Us vetterns got to do our share
Fer every soldier's widda.

But Andy, poor old boy! his grave—
We tend to that, or—Car'line does;
'N' then, of course, she likes to have
Her little quiet cry, becuz—
Well, jes' becuz—'twixt you 'n' me
It's on'y natural—for you see,
I *married* Andy's widda.

'N' so it's kinder comforting
When Decoration day comes round
With the rememberies it bring
Of them old comrades underground,
It's really comforting to drink
Poor Andy's health 'n'—well, to think
His wife *ain't* left a widda.

A GRADUATE.

Practice, they say, makes perfect in each art:
The heart, then, truly
In Cupid's lore, if studious from the start,
Must progress duly.

Ergo—the fact that I have loved before,
Proves only, now, dear,
That I can love you better far, and more
By knowing how, dear.

WHAT GLADYS SAID

Said Gladys with a smile of bright disdain,
(The season is her first; she knows not yet
The sweet and bitter uses of her reign,
The perils in her frowns and dimples set;)

Said Gladys, (and I heard her little foot
Beat its impatience on the favored ground,
The while I longed to button up that boot
With kisses from its toe to ankle round;)

Said Gladys, (and I listened, who would not?
Watching those lips that might a saint beguile)—
What did she say? Really, I can't tell what—
I'm only certain that I saw her smile.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS

Blithe Christmas eve!
A threadbare sleeve
Looks cold and strange this festive weather;
And yet, content
With blessings sent,
My heart and I jog on together

I smoke and dream;
The street lights gleam
Below me, and the crowd that surges
Keeps steady pace
With equal grace
To wedding chimes, or funeral dirges.

My good cigar
Glows like a star,
'Tis from a box a woman sent me;
Such kindly thrift
In Christmas gift
Hath pleasant magic to content me.

Then let me view,
My smoke-cloud through,
Old flames—old joys—old Christmas treasures;
The eyes I loved,
The path I roved
In that dear world of sweet lost pleasures.

The rustic maid
Who gayly strayed,
With me, to pluck the holly berry;
The belle in plush,
Who stepped through slush
On Broadway crossings, blithe and merry.

The flying ride,
Where sleighers glide,
While bells rang soft from tower and steeple;
The moonlight fair
Like unheard prayer
Good angels breathe for worldly people.—

The kiss—the vow—
(Forgotten now:
Alas, for passion's fickle glowing!)
The castles fair
That rose in air,
The bubbles bright of fancy's blowing.—

Ah, sweet and vain!
Yet come again,
Dear dreams, to haunt my lonely attic—
Dear days long gone
Still, still live on
In visions baseless, but ecstatic!

'Tis Christmas Eve,
Why should I grieve?
The world has kindly hearts in plenty;
Love holds its charm,
And blushes warm
The dimpled cheek of sweet-and-twenty.

So Christmas cheer
Must still be dear,
Though small my portion of its treasure;
A kiss, a joke,
A quiet smoke,
And lo! Fate's hand hath filled my measure.

Then, joy bells, chime!
Though thought and rhyme
May idly drift, like floating feather;
Yet still content
With blessings sent,
My heart and I jog on together!

BESTOWALS

Dear, I would be to you the breath of balm
That sighs from folded blossoms, wet with dew;
The day's first dawn-ray I would be to you—
The starlight's cheery gleam, the moonlight's calm;
I would be as a pillow to your cheek,
When toil is done, and care hath ceased to grieve;
I would be the dear dream your soul doth seek,
The dream whose joy no waking hour can give.

When strength is ebbing and the road is long
I would be the firm staff, within your hand;
A pillar of cloud in the sun-beaten land,
A pillar of fire, where night's black shadows throng,
Last, at Death's threshold, tender, faithful —Nay!
What need to tell that which heart's truth hath shown?
Is not all said, beloved, when I say
"I love you" being woman, and your own?

LIFE'S MIRROR

There are loyal hearts, there are spirits brave
  There are souls that are pure and true.
Then give to the world the best you have
  And the best will come back to you.

Give love, and love to your life will flow,
  A strength, in its utmost need.
Have faith, and a score of hearts will show
  Their faith in your word and deed.

Give truth, and your gift will be paid in kind
  And honor will honor meet;
And a smile that is sweet will surely find
  A smile that is just as sweet!

Give pity and sorrow to those that mourn,
  You will gather in flowers again;
The scattered seeds from your thought out-
      borne
Though the sowing seemed but vain.

For life is the mirror of king and slave
  It is just what we are, and do.
Then give to the world the best you have
  And the best will come back to you!

TRANSLATIONS

From the Spanish of Becquer

THE DARK SWALLOWS

The swift dark swallows, will they return,
To hang their nests in thy balcony
And again with their wings at thy window, yearn
And flutteringly call to thee!
But those that stayed in their happy flight,
To see our rapture, perchance to learn
A song that might tell of love's delight—
They will never return.

The young green vines, will they climb and grow
O'er thy garden earth-wall, in timid hope
Of thy greeting smile—and more gently so,
Will their beautiful blossoms ope!
But those that trembled in mid-night dew—
Whose drops were tears of a passionate day—
No more shall their loveliness bring anew,
Thy forgotten May!

And thou. . . . Oh, thou . . . as was God adored
Before his altar, on bended knee
As I have loved thee, and knelt and poured
The soul of love's incense out to thee;
As I have loved thee . . . thou knowest HOW!
Yet know this, also,—for bliss or bane
In life or death, never shalt thou
Be so loved again!

WHAT IS POETRY?

What is poetry? you ask,
While your blue eyes smiling look
Through my soul—their open book—
Can you ask? Ah, sweet, to me
You are Poetry!

From the Spanish of A Bèquer.

HER LOOK

To-day the earth and the heavens broad,
Smile and sparkle from pole to pole,
The sun shines down in the depths of my soul
With light that will last through eternity.
To-day I saw her—she looked at me—
To-day I believe in God!

HER KISS

For one of your looks the world, well lost;
For one of your smiles, Heaven's dearest bliss,
For one of your kisses—ah me! the cost!
What should I give for your kiss—your kiss?

WHERE GOES LOVE?

Sighs are air, and return to air—
Tears are water—to water flow—
Now tell me woman, where does Love go
When Love is forgotten? ah where? ah where?

HER ROSE

How can it live, the rose thou wearest,
glowing
Upon thy burning breast?
Never before was seen a flower growing
On a volcano's crest!

From the Spanish of Bonalde

FLIGHT

Bird, that fliest out from earth
  Why dost thou return again?
What is thy glad freedom worth
  If thou can't not far remain?

Happy, happy bird! had I
  But the wings for which I yearn,
Ah, how far, far would I fly,
  Never, never to return!

THOU AND I

Thou art the muse, I am the lyre,—
  Thou art the sap, and I the tree,—
I am the field, thou, the sun fire,
  That ripens me.

I am the nest, and thou, the bird—
  The wave am I, and thou the flood,
I am the brain where thought is stirred—
  Thou, the life-blood.

I am the Earth, thou art the Heaven,
  I, shade—thou, light, I part—thou, whole—
I am the body that the soul may live in—
  Thou art the Soul!

From the German of Heine

RESIGNATION

At first, I cried, "Dear God, I canot bear it,
I cannot bear this bitter pain,"—but now—
Now, my sad lips are silent. I *have* borne it,
Only, beloved, do not ask me HOW!

THE PARTING

The note that seals our parting
Though clearly writ and strong,
Brings not my tears quick starting
For, Sweet, thy note was long—

Twelve pages, neat and clever,
Prove thy decision true;
But, love, do lovers ever
Thus write, or say adieu?

THREE GIRLS

Two girls are my distraction,
They vex me, day and night,
The one, by her affection,
The other by her spite.—

Their blended power harasses,
And makes my life forlorn;
One, by unsought caresses,
And one, by frowns of scorn.

Yet, there's a third who haunts me—
Charming both sight and sense,
Nor love, nor hate, she grants me,
Only indifference!

Gray

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